

## Nov 8 2005 - Pentagon Reverses Decision, Will Carry Ed Schultz on American Forces Radio

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Slaughter Authored Letter to DoD Inspector General Calling for Balance on AFR

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, is pleased to announce that the Ed Shultz Show will soon begin broadcasting on American Forces Radio. The program had previously been scheduled to debut on AFR on October 17th, but the Pentagon eliminated it from AFR's schedule on the morning of its premier. Mr. Schultz had criticized a Defense Department official, Allison Barber, on the previous Friday.

"The Pentagon has done the right thing in opening up the airwaves that reach so many of our troops and fellow citizens to a broad range of political thought and analysis," Rep. Slaughter said. "Political censorship isn't acceptable to the American people, and I'm glad that our government officials have decided that the rights we have fought to preserve at home and abroad won't be undermined by the work of our own hand," she added.

Shortly after the Pentagon's removal of Mr. Schultz from its schedule, Rep. Slaughter authored a letter to Thomas F. Gimble, Acting Inspector General of the Department of Defense, calling for a full investigation into the cancellation of the show and the lack of political diversity on AFR. The letter was co-signed by 23 Members of Congress.

"We cannot in good conscience ask the soldiers who are already sacrificing so much to also give up access to diverse views," the letter read. "The need to provide our deployed servicemen and women with more diverse programming has been recognized and supported by Congress. The Pentagon must do its part to ensure that our troops are not asked to sacrifice their freedom of information while they are in service to our nation."

The full text of the letter to Mr. Gimble, including a list of signatories, is included below:

November 4, 2005

Mr. Thomas F. Gimble

Acting Inspector General

U.S. Department of Defense

400 Army Navy Drive

Arlington, VA 22202-4704

Dear Mr. Gimble,

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the Department of Defense's refusal to carry "The Ed Schultz Show" on the American Forces Network (AFN) Radio as scheduled, and to ask that you launch an immediate investigation into the Pentagon's delay in providing balanced programming on AFN Radio.

The current AFN Radio schedule includes radio programming by well-known, right-wing talk show hosts including Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Rush Limbaugh. We strongly support soldiers' access to social and political commentary; however, we are troubled by the apparent lack of diverse views available on AFN Radio. In addition, efforts to include progressive programming appear to be constantly stymied by overly burdensome review processes and miscommunications.

Last month, an e-mail received by Jones Radio, the distributor of "The Ed Schultz Show," from the Chief of the Radio Division for AFN, stated, "AFN Radio has squared away everything on our end to begin carrying the first hour of 'The Ed Schultz Show' each day, beginning Monday, October 17, 2005." However, at 7:00 a.m. on October 17, the producer of Mr. Schultz's program received a phone call from the Pentagon's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Internal Communications, Allison Barber, informing him that the program had been pulled from AFN Radio's schedule without offering any explanation.

To date, the Department of Defense has denied allegations that the debut of Mr. Schultz's show was cancelled due to political motivations or in retribution for comments the host made in the days prior to the scheduled launch of "The Ed Schultz Show." In those comments, Mr. Schultz criticized the Department of Defense and Ms. Barber for staging a video conference press event between the President and US troops. Instead, the Department has since claimed that it is continuing to review a number of programs in an attempt to provide more diversity to AFN Radio. We are concerned that the length of the program review process is unnecessarily impeding our troops' access to balanced, diverse programming. In addition, we are worried that the review process utilized for the selection of progressive programming is more stringent than that used for conservative programming.

Department of Defense regulation states the programming on the American Forces Radio and Television Service is "provided without censorship, propagandizing, or manipulation." Given the lack of diversity, we are concerned that this regulation is not being obeyed. In your Mission Statement as Inspector General, you describe your role "as an extension of 'the eyes, ears, and conscience' of the Secretary." It is, therefore, critical that you conduct an investigation into the motivation behind canceling Mr. Schultz's program, and the continued delay in providing progressive programming on AFN Radio.

We cannot in good conscience ask the soldiers who are already sacrificing so much to also give up access to diverse views. The need to provide our deployed servicemen and women with more diverse programming has been recognized and supported by Congress. The Pentagon must do its part to ensure that our troops are not asked to sacrifice their freedom of information while they are in service to our nation. We ask that you do your part by examining the review process for all programming permitted on AFN Radio. In addition, we request that you investigate the application of the review process on conservative and progressive programs to determine if it is objectively applied, and provide an analysis of the diversity of programs currently broadcasting on AFN Radio.

We appreciate your attention to this request, and we await your response.

Sincerely,

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Louise M. Slaughter

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Diane E. Watson

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Steny H. Hoyer

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John Conyers, Jr.

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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George Miller

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Rahm Emanuel

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Bob Filner

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Earl Pomeroy

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Raúl M. Grijalva

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Barbara Lee

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Joe Crowley

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Jim McDermott

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Michael M. Honda

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Frank Pallone, Jr.

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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James L. Oberstar

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Janice D. Schakowsky

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Gary L. Ackerman

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James P. McGovern

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown

Betty McCollum

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Rick Boucher

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Lynn C. Woolsey

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Tammy Baldwin

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Carolyn Maloney

Member of Congress

Member of Congress